Health Trust Annual Meeting Draws Record Attendance

CIGNA Transition is Top Issue

Over 160 VLCT Health Trust members gathered at the Stoweflake Conference Center on November 17 to hear Trust officials outline the whys and the hows of the Trust’s transition from current insurance provider Blue Cross Blue Shield to new provider CIGNA.

Trust President William Shepeluk spent a good part of the morning session explaining how the Trust reached the decision to end its 20-year business relationship with Blue Cross Blue Shield. While there were many factors that tipped the complicated rate renewal negotiations in CIGNA’s favor, in the

(Continued on Page Two)

VLCT Handbooks Available On-line

All VLCT handbooks are now included in the VLCT Web site’s Resource Library (www.vlct.org). Their 24/7 availability is part of the Municipal Assistance Center’s efforts to make its resources more easily accessible to all VLCT members, all of the time.

Once you are in the Resource Library, you can access the handbooks via the Search function (by entering the title or keywords) or the Browse function. To use Browse, scroll down and click on the Handbooks and Surveys category. This will bring up a list of all the hand-

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Next Stop – Legislative Session 2007!

Warm breezes and even intermittently sunny skies in mid-November belie the fact that it is late fall in Vermont and the holiday season is here. Elections are over (what a relief!), which can only mean the 2007 Legislative Session is upon us. New and returning legislators are not waiting for January 3, the convening of the new biennium, to draft their bills.

The upcoming session features 23 Democrats in the Senate and seven Republicans. In the House, 93 Democrats have pledged to work cooperatively with their colleagues: 49 Republicans, six Progressives, two Independents, and a Republican governor. Fortunately for local officials, the issues that are of most concern to municipalities are not in and of themselves partisan in nature, although by the end of a legislative session it is hard to find anything that is not cast in partisan terms. The VLCT counts local officials of every political stripe amongst its members, and quite a few alumni of local government are among the ranks of the newly elected legislature. As a result, there is always someone to talk to who understands local issues. And

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end, Shepeluk said, “with a difference to the taxpayers of Vermont of $6 million …, we decided it was something that we had to do.” Blue Cross Blue Shield’s final 2007 rate renewal offer had come in at a 23% increase over 2006 rates (and did not include an ad-
dditional 6% increase to cover required re-
serves). CIGNA rate increases for 2007 will average 12%, a considerable savings to the employees and taxpayers who pay for health insurance through the Trust. (The Trust covers 3,800 municipal employees; with their dependents, the number covered climbs to almost 9,000 people.)
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Jeanie Kelly  
Anita Bourgeois  
Shelly Quinn  
Wanda Oczuchowski  
Gene Arnold  
Marge Barker  
Connie Brennan  
Patricia Carlino  
John Conte  
Nicole Dumais  
Arleen Girard  
Ted May  
John Quartararo  
Ted Scontras  
Dianne Skerry  
Melissa Williams

TD Banknorth
In 1961, Davis conveyed the reserved property to George McDonald and Bruce Washburn. The 1961 deed again contained no reference to any easement across the WMA. McDonald and Washburn in turn subdivided the property into eighteen lots, reserving a right-of-way for each lot over every other lot in the subdivision. In 1997, Mr. Berge purchased two of the lots from a successor to McDonald and Washburn. Thereafter, Mr. Berge regularly accessed his property by car over a gravel road across the WMA.

Controversy arose when the State placed a gate across the gravel road, depriving Mr. Berge of overland access to his property. The State asserted that Mr. Berge did not have an express easement to use the road and that an easement by necessity was not present because Mr. Berge had access to his property from Route 114 over the public waters of Norton Pond.

The Supreme Court disagreed, holding that without the use of the road, Mr. Berge would lack any means of access for the reasonable enjoyment of his land: “We depend on roads and automobiles for transporting not only our family and friends, but all of our basic necessities to and from our homes, and it is a quaint but ultimately pointless fiction to pretend that water – much less ice – represents a sufficient substitute.” The Court held that water access did not defeat Mr. Berge’s easement by necessity claim and remanded the case back to the trial court for findings related to the claim, location of the easement, and any related defenses by the State.

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LEGAL/REG. NOTES -  
(Continued from previous page)

While local development review boards, zoning boards of adjustment, and planning commissions do not have jurisdiction to determine the existence or location of easements and rights-of-way, they are charged under 24 V.S.A. § 4412(3) with ensuring that a sufficient easement exists when a parcel to be developed lacks road or water frontage. The Court’s decision in Berge is a significant departure from its previous precedents in this area. Seasonal camps are relatively common in the state and, as the dissent points out, water access may be entirely reasonable and practical for the limited uses such properties are subject to. This notion is reflected in 24 V.S.A. § 4412(3), which expressly recognizes frontage on a public waters as being sufficient access to allow such development. Only time and litigation will tell, but the holding in Berge may indicate that water access is not sufficient and that development of waterfront parcels requires year-round access by car.

- Jim Barlow, Attorney, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center

INCREASE IN VERMONT’S MINIMUM WAGE

Starting January 1, 2007, Vermont’s minimum wage will increase from its current rate of $7.25 per hour to $7.53 per hour. Under State law, Vermont’s minimum wage will increase every January 1 by whichever of the following is smallest (21 V.S.A. § 384(a)):

- five percent; or
- percentage increase of the Consumer Price Index.

Of these, the CPI saw the smallest increase (3.8%) over the 12-month period preceding September 1, 2006.

If the federal minimum wage rate were higher than Vermont’s for any one year, then that rate would control for that year. Currently, the federal minimum wage is $5.15 per hour. It has been at that rate since September 1, 1997.

VLCT HEALTH TRUST -  
(Continued from Page Two)

Having made the decision to switch to CIGNA, Shepeluk told Trust members, “at the end of 2006, approaching 2007, we find ourselves at a serious crossroads.” Acknowledging that Blue Cross Blue Shield may try to retain some of the Trust’s larger, healthier members with low, initial rates, Shepeluk urged Trust members to think long-term. “We know [the transition] is going to be tumultuous for you, but we ask that you stick with us. Our buying power as a group is going to be much better than it would be individually.”

Shepeluk also made the point that, in doing their “due diligence” research before selecting CIGNA, Trust officials and staff, with their consultants, had carefully checked CIGNA’s numbers, availability of providers, and in-state references. “We asked a lot of tough questions,” he said, “and they had an answer for every question that we asked.

This pattern continued during the portion of the meeting in which CIGNA staff introduced their company, products and services to Health Trust members. Audience members asked good questions and CIGNA staff gave good answers. They noted that CIGNA has three-year contracts with health providers and hospitals, contracts that are staggered by design to cushion future rate increases. And, unlike Blue Cross Blue Shield, which contracts to pay a set percentage of charges, CIGNA agrees with providers and hospitals on a set price for the life of the contract.

Members asked questions about existing transition to CIGNA. CIGNA staff noted that it was also working to fill in any small gaps in its provider network by making an agreement with the MVP Health Plan, effective July 1, 2007, that allows it to partially access MVP’s provider networks. Finally, recognizing the important role that health insurance rates play in the municipal budgeting cycle, CIGNA staff promised to deliver 2008 rates to the Trust by November 1, 2007.

Both CIGNA Vice-president Tom Morrissey and CIGNA Implementation Manager John White stressed that, in the migration from Blue Cross Blue Shield plans to CIGNA plans, Trust members would see very few benefit levels decline, while increases in other levels would most likely cancel out any declines. “We set out,” Morrissey said, “to offer equal to or better than plans.” Vision coverage, a national network for easier out-of-state care, and fewer, or nonexistent prior authorization requirements were mentioned as just a few of the areas

NEW LIFE, COBRA, AND CAFETERIA PLAN VENDORS

“Change.” This one word says it all for the VLCT Health Trust’s 24th year, President William Shepeluk noted at the Trust’s recent Annual Meeting. In addition to a new health insurance provider, the Trust selected new providers for three of its other employee benefit products and services. Representatives from UNUM Provident (life, disability, long-term care insurance), COBRA Outsourcing (COBRA compliance assistance), and Future Planning Associates (Section 125 Cafeteria Plans) all attended the Annual Meeting to introduce themselves and their companies to the Health Trust membership.

If you are interested in exploring the services these companies can offer your municipality, please contact the Member Relations Division at kavery@vlct.org.

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Does a town that has been researching and mapping ancient roads have to hold a special hearing in order to add any previously unknown highways to its town highway map and sworn certificate of highway mileage?

No. However, when adding what has been commonly known as an “ancient road” to a town highway map and sworn certificate, the rules are now a little different than they are for adding other highways.

When adding town highways that may otherwise become “unidentified corridors” (a.k.a. ancient roads) in 2009 to the map and certificate in the period before the July 1, 2009 deadline, a town must provide property owners whose land the highway passes through or abuts with 45 days written notice before deciding whether or not to add the highway to its map and sworn certificate, and an opportunity to be heard at a duly warned meeting.

The creation of a new category of town highways called unidentified corridors is perhaps the most well known change represented by the passage of Act 178 (often referred to as the “Ancient Roads Bill”) last spring. Unidentified corridors are essentially the same kinds of highways that have always been thought of as ancient roads – legally established town highways that once existed on the ground and on paper, but are no longer easily seen or found in either place.

Unidentified corridors do not come into existence until July 1, 2009, and are eventually discontinued on July 1, 2015. In order for a town highway to become an unidentified corridor, it must have been legally established, it must not appear on a town highway map as of July 1, 2009, it is not clearly observable by any physical evidence of its use, and is not a legally established trail. If it does not meet all four of those criteria on July 1, 2009, a town highway does not become an unidentified corridor.

The sworn certificate of highway mileage, and the corresponding town highway map, is filed with the Agency of Transportation on or before February 10 of each year.

For more information, contact Trevor Lashua at 800/649-7915 or tlashua@vlct.org.

- Trevor Lashua, VLCT Associate, Advocacy and Information Services

What is the amount that a delinquent taxpayer must pay in order to redeem property sold at tax sale?

The delinquent taxpayer – or the mortgagee of the lands, or his or her representative or assigns – may redeem property sold at tax sale within one year from the day of the sale by paying the sale price (what the property sold for at the tax sale) plus interest of 1% per month, or fraction thereof from the day of sale to the day of payment.

There is frequently confusion as to whether this 1% is assessed against the amount of delinquent taxes owed or the price obtained at the tax sale. The controlling statute states the amount necessary to redeem is “the sum for which the land was sold with interest thereon calculated at a rate of one percent per month or fraction thereon from the day of sale to the day of payment.” 32 V.S.A. § 5260 (emphasis added). VLCT interprets this to mean that interest is calculated on the tax sale price, not on the amount of the past-due taxes.

When a party bids at a tax sale, there is no guaranty that he or she will become the owner of the property. The successful bidder must wait the one-year redemption period to obtain title. During this time, the delinquent taxpayer retains full possession of the property. The purpose of the interest calculation is to provide an additional incentive, beyond the possibility of obtaining title, for parties to bid at the sale. It also provides a strong incentive for delinquent taxpayers to redeem promptly, before significant interest accrues. While a potential annual return of 12% (1% per month for 12 months) on the sale price may seem high, without this incentive, fewer bidders would be inclined to tie up their money for up to a year.

- Garrett Baxter, Senior Associate, VLCT Municipal Assistance Center
there is almost always one of you – a sitting local official – who knows one or more legislators well and will do the talking! Thank you in advance.

VLCT’s highest priorities reflect those voiced by legislative leadership in many respects.

- Everyone along the campaign trail heard that property taxes are too high, concurrently with the message that the cost of schooling and education funding must be addressed. The VLCT education funding recommendations, adopted at the annual meeting on October 5, call on the Legislature to:
  A) Rely less heavily on property taxes;
  B) Control education spending without interfering with local decision-making;
  C) Provide our schools with the resources they need to educate our children; and
  D) Fairly distribute resources and tax burdens throughout our state.

(To see these recommendations in their entirety, visit http://www.vlct.org/advocacy/legislativeplatform/ or watch for your copy of the 2007 VLCT Municipal Policy Priorities to arrive by mail later this month.)

With a boost from the Commissioner of Education’s forums on school governance, which are slated to occur around the state during the upcoming session, the urgency of finding a solution to education funding with which Vermonters can live will never be off of the front burner.

- In no one’s mind did last year’s legislative action completely solve the health care crisis. VLCT members are painfully aware of the ramifications of escalating health insurance costs this year, as the Health Trust was compelled to end a 20-year relationship with Blue Cross Blue Shield and move to a new insurer, CIGNA. Even with the move, the Health Trust is still looking at rate increases well in excess of the inflation rate.

- Costs of completing transportation projects continue to escalate at the same time that transportation revenues are declining. Federal “Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act (SAFETEA-LU) dollars require matches of between 10 and 20%, depending upon the nature of the project. New VTTrans secretary, Neal Lunderville, has committed to assuring that municipalities get the dollars they have been promised and that no federal money is left “on the table.”

- Several bills will address energy conservation and renewable energy projects, including some legislation that gives municipalities the authority to undertake those kinds of initiatives on their own. Two examples are enabling municipalities to own their streetlights and re-activating micro-hydro projects that may have been used many years ago to

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**LEGISLATIVE PREVIEW MEETINGS**

VLCT staff members Karen Horn and Trevor Lashua are offering two legislative preview meetings in December for local officials who are interested in discussing the important municipal issues facing the 2007 Legislature. The morning sessions are free, informal, and will include light refreshments. Please plan to attend one, and bring your ideas for legislative action! The meetings will be:

- Tuesday, December 12, Milton Town Office, 9-11 a.m., and
- Thursday, December 14, Wilmington Town Office, 9-11 a.m.

To register on-line, please visit www.vlct.org/eventcalendar/. You may also call VLCT at 800/649-7915.
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In no one’s mind did last year’s legislative action completely solve the health care crisis.

Leg. Session 2007 - (Continued from previous page)

power small industrial enterprises.

• As always, Payments in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) is a priority for municipalities, particularly those that receive PILOT payments and those that already have or are seeking local option taxing authority.

• It may be that 2007 is a year in which wholesale changes to the municipal planning statutes, growth centers incentives and state permitting requirements are avoided. Wouldn’t that be a treat? Last year, regional commission staff and local officials, with some advice from the Environmental Court, put together a lengthy list of technical changes to permit reform. Action was never taken on those proposals. As gratifying as it would be for the Legislature to leave alone the substance of Chapter 117 (Municipal and Regional Planning Statutes in Title 24), it would be very helpful to see some action on the technical amendments.

• Regrettably, 2007 will see the Agency of Natural Resources request increases in permit fees. Generally speaking, even though the House Ways and Means Committee has been sympathetic to municipal cries of outrage, this only costs cities, towns and villages money. Please be ready to discuss these fees come February.

• Another issue that has become a permanent fixture among municipal legislative priorities is how the Department of Corrections handles offenders who are released, under its supervision, into communities around the state. This fall, VLCT staff worked with the Police Chiefs Association and municipalities hosting Corrections populations to address proposed rules and guidelines regarding caseloads for Department of Corrections field staff. The issue and controversy around how, when, and how many offenders to return to a community is not going away anytime soon.

VLCT staff members follow more than 200 bills a session that could affect local governments. The municipal policy itself addresses more than 200 different issues. So take a deep breath! The 2007 session is ready for lift off. And when it gets rolling, we are going to need your help!

- Karen Horn, Director, VLCT Public Policy and Advocacy Services
MARKETING OPPORTUNITIES FOR CITIES AND TOWNS

STATE VISITOR CENTERS WANT TO TELL YOUR STORY

WHO WE ARE

The Vermont Information Center Division is a part of the State Department of Buildings and General Services. The Division’s 20 visitor centers across the state annually host 4,000,000 visitors. Our goal is to provide the highest level of customer service to travelers and to use the sites to promote Vermont’s communities, businesses and attractions.

HOW WE CAN HELP

State Information Centers serve an estimated 11,000 people each day, and are an important planning resource for Vermont tourists. In a state without billboards and with limited directional signage, the Centers provide helpful, courteous and knowledgeable information to visitors. This places them in the unique position of being able to influence the traveler passing through the state. Listed below are some of the amenities the Centers offer:

• Statewide brochure distribution at competitive prices
• Use of display cases (free)
• Demonstration opportunities (free)
• Event banner display (free)
• Event promotions (free)
• Guest and customer referrals (free)
• Promotional story panel opportunities (free)

Staff at the Vermont Information Center Division work hard to guide tourists – every day of the year – to Vermont’s communities, attractions, businesses and events. We would be honored for the opportunity to promote your community. Let us help you tell your story!

If your town is interested in more information about this exciting opportunity, please contact Ed VonTurkovich, Director, at 802/828-3648 or ed.vonturkovich@state.vt.us or Lisa Sanchez at 802/828-6909 or lisa.sanchez@state.vt.us.

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info@ottercrk.com
Inaugural Leader Program Returns Funds to Members

In November, the VLCT Health Trust’s newest wellness initiative, the Leader Program, successfully closed out its first year. Just over $300,000 will be distributed back to 49 Health Trust members who tracked their performance on a number of wellness programs and initiatives during 2006. Members will be credited by the end of the year in amounts ranging from a low of $216 (Charleston) to a high of $22,383 (Rutland City).

The Health Trust budgeted $350,000 for the Leader’s first year; the $50,000 not paid out this year will be rolled over into the 2007 Leader Program.

“We are very pleased to be able to reward our members financially for a job well done,” said Brian FitzPatrick, Acting Director for Group Services. “We know that our Leader Program asks a lot of our members, and we are very excited that they rose to the occasion and made wellness a priority.”

The 2007 Leader Program will be rolled out at the five Wellness Coordinator meetings scheduled for locations around the state in January and February 2007. To register on-line, please visit www.vlct.org/eventscalendar/, or call VLCT at 800/649-7915.

Last month’s Health Trust Annual Meeting recognized six Trust members for their participation in the 2006 Leader Program. From left to right are Katie Johnson, Addison County Solid Waste Management District (highest score, small town); Amy Jewell, Chittenden Solid Waste Management District (highest score, medium town); Arlene Shorten-Goodrich, Vermont State Housing Authority (highest score, large town); Renny Perry, Vergennes (most improved medium town); and Carrie Johnson, Georgia (most improved small town). Not pictured is Michael Welch, St. Johnsbury (most improved large town). Congratulations to you all!
After an accident on the job, people often wonder what they could have done to prevent it. That, of course, can help avoid similar accidents in the future. But the best way to prevent job accidents is to think about prevention before an accident happens, not after. For example, think about:

- What could go wrong before you start any job. Then take the necessary precautions to prevent accidents, such as eliminating hazards or wearing personal protective equipment.
- The information, procedures, and techniques you’ve learned in safety meetings and training sessions that could help prevent an accident.
- Requirements of safety rules and regulations that apply to the job.
- The equipment, tools, materials, etc. you need to perform jobs safely.
- Any additional steps you could take to ensure safety in your work area.
- How you can encourage co-workers to take proper safety precautions and work more safely.
- Ideas for improving safety performance in your department and your organization.

In addition, use your safety sense to protect you and your co-workers. That means using common sense full-time and paying attention to your “gut feelings.” If something just doesn’t seem right to you, it probably isn’t.

For more information about the safety and wellness resources available from the VLCT Safety and Health Promotion Program, please contact Shawna McNamara at smcnamara@vlct.org, or call 800/649-7915. 
The Vermont Recreation Trails Grant Program is soliciting proposals from municipalities and non-profit organizations for recreation trail grants under the 2007 round of funding. The Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation expects that approximately $450,000 in matching funds will be available for 2007. Funds require a minimum 20% sponsor match for all projects, except for mini-grants, which require no local match.

Up to $3,000 of available funds will be set aside for mini-grants. Mini-grants of up to $500 allow for 100% of project costs to be awarded to provide training, develop a trail, or purchase educational tools or materials.

Competitive grants of up to 80% of a project's cost are awarded to communities and non-profit organizations for: (1) maintenance of existing trails; (2) restoration of areas damaged by use of trails; (3) development and rehabilitation of trail-side and trail-head facilities; (4) features which facilitate access to and use of trails by persons with physical challenges; (5) construction of new trails on state, municipal or private lands where a recreational need for such construction is shown; (6) preparation and printing of trail-related maps, studies, kiosks, and other environmental educational information or materials related to trails; (7) trail protection including fee simple title to property or easement acquisition for recreation trails or recreation trail corridors; (8) purchase of hand tools for trail work; and, (9) assessment of trail conditions for accessibility. Trails previously funded through this program include construction and restoration of the Long Trail and its amenities, regional connector trails, and town nature interpretive trails.

A grant workshop will be held via interactive television on the evening of December 4th. To find out more, or sign up for the workshop, visit our Web site at www.vtfpr.org/recgrant/trgrant.cfm. Applications must be received by 4:30 p.m. on Monday, January 15, 2007 to be considered for this round of funding. Upon federal approval, funding will be made available to the highest ranked projects in the spring of 2007.

For more information on this program, contact Sherry Winnie, Recreation Trails Program Administrator, at the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, 103 South Main Street, Bldg. 10 South, Waterbury, VT 05671-0604, telephone 802/241-3690.
Tech Check

Budget Scenarios in Excel

There is a tool in Excel called Scenarios that can be useful as you construct your budgets and try to determine sensitivity to changes in the grand list, benefit costs or other variables not yet set in stone.

We will use the table below to illustrate the tool. Copy this table into an Excel worksheet. The tax rates are formulas dividing the taxes by the grand list. The individual line items that comprise the appropriation are shown as well.

Our challenge is to determine the effect of three potential scenarios that differ from the estimates shown: 1) a grand list that is 10% less than projected due to a business considering moving out of town; 2) benefits that increase 30% rather than the estimated 15% due to higher than anticipated health insurance costs. We would like to determine the tax rate increase if both of these events occur or if either occurs.

In the main menu of Excel click on Tools then Scenarios. A dialogue box entitle Scenario Manager appears. Click on the Add button to create your first scenario. In the Edit Scenario box that appears, type a name for this scenario. We'll call it "GL and Benefits." The next step is to click on the Changing Cells box to choose the cells you wish to change with this scenario. To choose non-adjacent cells, hold your control (Ctrl) key as you click on each cell to be changed. We'll choose the grand list and benefits cells in the 2007 column (C3 and C9).

The next step is to enter the adjusted numbers for the grand list and benefits: $900,000 and $260,000 respectively. Click OK.

To add your other two scenarios, follow the same steps. Call the second scenario “GL Only,” entering $900,000 for cell C3 and $230,000 for C9. The last scenario is “Benefits Only” with $1,000,000 for cell C3 and $260,000 for C9. You now have three listed scenarios. By clicking on Show, the adjusted table with the changed numbers is shown. You can click on any of the scenarios to show the new tables. The scenario with changes to both the grand list and benefits results in a 21.6% increase in the tax rate, the scenario with just the grand list change shows a 17.9% increase and the scenario with the benefits change only shows a 9.4% increase.

To generate a summary of the changes to the cells with the resulting tax rate change, click on Summary, and in the Scenario Summary box choose the result cells (those cells showing the results of your scenario adjustments you wish to see) that contain the 2007 tax rate, variance and percent increase. Click OK and the summary table will be added as a separate worksheet.

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www.dubois-king.com

VLCT Handbooks -
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books and surveys, with short descriptions of each.

All of VLCT’s current handbooks are in the Library, with the exception of the annual Compensation and Benefits Report. A hard copy of this report was provided earlier this fall, free-of-charge, to all participating municipalities.

The on-line versions of the handbooks and surveys are in portable document format (PDF), which requires Adobe Reader for access. This free software is available to download from http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html. To keep the file size manageable, some of the larger handbooks have been broken up into sections. For tips on how to best use these files, please see last month’s Tech Check column, “Using Adobe Reader to Work with PDF Files.” You should also read the On-Line Handbook Notice in the beginning of each handbook for further guidance on their use.

Please contact MAC Research and Information Assistant Tara Fischer at tfischer@vlct.org if you have any questions about accessing the handbooks, or any other material, in the on-line Resource Library.

Scenarios allow you to see quickly the results of multiple adjustments to your budget. It is a particularly useful tool when there are a number of unknown variables. You can use it to test the range of variability and determine the most probable events without making numerous changes to your budget software. Best of all, it’s only a computer program and won’t complain if the tax rate goes up!

- Michael Gilbar, VLCT Chief Financial Officer

Trivia

Congratulations this month to Jackie Higgins, Royalton administrative assistant (and trivia whiz). Jackie’s was the only correct answer to the November challenge: the Connecticut River follows 271 miles of Vermont’s border. That is a long canoe trip!

Here is our December challenge:

On September 10 and 11 of this year, the first Vermont State Fair was held, providing a major social event for the community, as well as an opportunity for farmers to learn about the latest agricultural developments. What was the year and the location?

Contact us with your answer: VLCT, 89 Main Street, Suite 4, Montpelier, VT 05602, tel. 800/649-7915, fax, 802/229-2211, e-mail, kroe@vlct.org.
TAX CREDITS HELP REVITALIZE DOWNTOWNS, VILLAGES

There is growing awareness that maintaining and investing in older and historic buildings benefits Vermont’s downtowns and village centers. It helps preserve Vermont’s landscape, connects us to our heritage, and enriches the quality of our lives in countless intangible ways.

However, local officials may not be aware of the new state legislation and the federal programs that provide substantial economic benefits to private property owners who improve these buildings. In 2006, as part of the Growth Centers Bill, the Legislature revamped the Downtown and Village Center income tax incentives to promote continued use of older and historic income-producing buildings.

These incentives encourage the installation of sprinklers, elevators and other building upgrades to provide needed housing, office, retail, and other commercial space. In addition, the tax credits became simpler to use and more accessible to smaller scale projects – particularly in Village Centers – by allowing sale of tax credits to banks in exchange for cash or mortgage adjustments.

HOW IT WORKS

The Vermont Downtown Development Board, which works to support local revitalization efforts and is widely recognized for improvements brought to the state’s historic centers, allocates the credits to property owners in designated village centers or downtowns. The Board, working with the Vermont Downtown Program, also grants Downtown or Village Center designation, which provides other benefits such as priority consideration for community development, transportation enhancement, municipal planning and other State grant programs. Since 1997, more than 90 communities have been designated. The State has dedicated $9.5 million to these communities, generating over $70 million in private and municipal investment.

The State tax credits are designed to leverage the use of the federal 20% tax credit program for the rehabilitation of historic buildings listed or eligible for listing on the National Register. Over 10,000 buildings in Vermont are pre-qualified for this program, with many eligible buildings in downtowns and village centers. With the added State incentives, Vermont ranks among the top ten nationally in use of the federal rehabilitation program and typically leads New England in the number of projects ($22 million in federal tax credits to Vermont taxpayers in the past ten years).

This federal-state partnership creates a robust investment incentive which has returned to productive service numerous deteriorated, abandoned, and fire damaged buildings destined to become cellar holes or parking lots. This new investment in buildings results in increased local property and sales taxes and brings new vitality to our traditional historic centers. In addition, these programs promote economic development by employing local architects, engineers, contractors, and craftsmen.

While strong demand for the State credits has already used up the $1.5 million available this fiscal year, it’s anticipated the programs will have at least that much available again on July 1, 2007. Because it often takes some lead time to become a Designated Downtown or Village Center, and for a project to mature into a tax credit application, this fall and winter are ideal times to start working towards a summer project.

- Chris Cochran, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Additional details and application guidelines are available at www.HistoricVermont.org. For questions or additional information about tax credits or assistance with a local project, contact Chris.Cochran@state.vt.us (802/828-3047). For information on Downtown or Village Center designation, contact Joss.Bese@state.vt.us (802/828-5212) or Nate.Bailly@state.vt.us (802/828-3220).
“Customer service answers all of my questions... and they’re local. I can walk in and see them.”

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CALENDAR -
(Continued from Page Twenty)

Local Water Quality Protection. Thursday, January 25, 2007. Montpelier Elks Club, Montpelier, Vermont. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center. Local governments are uniquely positioned to protect surface waters from stormwater runoff and other contaminants. This workshop will present several tools for water quality protection, paying particular attention to reviewing developments that are exempt from state regulation and the statewide watershed planning process.

Wellness Coordinator Workshops. Thursday, January 25, 2007, Cortina Inn, Mendon; Thursday, February 1, 2007, Capitol Plaza Hotel; Thursday, February 8, 2007, Comfort Inn, St. Johnsbury; Thursday, February 15, 2007, Wilmington Town Office; or Thursday, February 22, 2007, Hampton Inn, Colchester. Sponsored by VLCT Insurance and Risk Management Services, this workshop will be offered in five locations around the state for the convenience of municipal wellness coordinators. We will discuss the Leader, a health promotion incentive program that rewards members who participate in wellness programs, explain this year’s pedometer program, and hear from our EAP representatives.

Municipal Personnel Primer. Thursday, February 8, 2007, Comfort Inn, St. Johnsbury, Thursday, February 15, 2007, Wilmington Town Office or Wednesday, February 21, 2007, Royalton Senior Center. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center. This evening presentation will focus on critical municipal personnel procedures relating to hiring, firing and managing municipal employees.

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Town Manager. The Town of Dorset, Vt. is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Town Manager. Dorset has a Selectmen/Town Meeting/Town Manager form of government with 7 full-time and 7 part-time employees. The municipal budget is $1.2 million (excluding the $8.7 million education budget). Dorset is a community of 2,100 people and is located in the North Shire of Bennington County. An applicant must demonstrate executive and administrative experience, including municipal management budgeting, financial management, grant writing, and public and employee relations. Experience in engineering/road maintenance is a plus. A salary of $55,000 (+/-) plus benefits is negotiable based on experience and training. The position will remain open until filled. To receive full consideration, applicants should submit a letter of interest, resume, and three recent job-related references by December 15, 2006 to A.D. Read, Selectboard Chair, P.O. Box 488, East Dorset, VT 05253. (11-10)

Water/Wastewater Assistant Operator. The Town of Proctor, Vt. seeks a qualified Public Water and Wastewater Systems Assistant Operator. Grade 4B Water System Operator Certification, Grade 2DM Wastewater System Operator Certification, and Class B CDL preferred, but willing to train the right person. Must have a valid driver’s license. Residency in Proctor or immediate area desired. Essential duties include skillfully operating and maintaining the Town-owned drinking water and sewer systems. This is a full-time, year-round position with benefits. Wages based upon experience. To obtain a complete job description, call the Town at 802/459-3333. Resumes accepted until position is filled. Submit resume and cover letter to: Richard Norris, Selectboard Chair, Proctor Town Offices, 45 Main Street, Proctor, VT 05765. EOE. (11-3)

Police Chief. The Town of Littleton, NH is seeking an experienced leader to manage its police department. The successful candidate will guide the department through the challenges of a growing community, and be capable of developing positive working relationships with employees, residents, business owners, town staff and elected officials. The Police Chief is a full-time, exempt position responsible for supervising, directing and managing all daily administrative and technical aspects of the police department. He or she will foster a professional responsive law enforcement team where safety, teamwork and public responsiveness are paramount. Additionally, the Chief will develop, monitor and enforce department policies and initiatives. The position reports directly to the Town Manager, who is consulted on major policy decisions and personnel matters. The department has 11 full-time officers, 2 part-time officers, 1 full-time administrative assistant, 1 part-time administrative assistant, and 1 part-time parking enforcement officer. The Town of Littleton has a population of 6,000, though its daily influx of people reaches 13,000. Qualifications: ten years or more of law enforcement experience, including five years of progressively responsible leadership experience; demonstrated abilities in strategic planning, organization, community-oriented policing, strong leadership and communication skills, and knowledge of departmental budgeting; an Associate’s degree from an accredited college or university in a related field or an equivalent combination of education and experience that would provide the necessary skills for the position; certification by the NH Police Standards and Training Council (or transferable certificate). Salary range, $55,000-60,000 DOQ/E, plus benefits. For a complete job description, e-mail knoyes@townoflittleton.org. To apply, submit resume, professional employment history, five references and cover letter to: Town Manager, 125 Main Street, Suite 200, Littleton, NH 03561. Position open until filled. (10-24)

Life Safety Inspector/Health Officer. The Town of Colchester, Vt. seeks an experienced professional for the position of Life Safety Inspector/Health Officer. Applicants must hold a Bachelor’s degree in planning, civil or structural engineering, environmental sciences, law enforcement or related fields, or minimum five years experience in zoning or permitting administration, building trades inspection, or related fields; or equivalent combination of education and experience. The individual must have knowledge of engineering and architectural standards of practice as applicable to local, state and national codes to include, but not limited to, town ordinances, national building and fire prevention codes, Vermont water and wastewater, solid waste, health department and public safety, and Division of Fire Safety regulations. Successful candidate will be a self-starter with excellent written and verbal communication skills. Starting salary is $43,595 and applications will be accepted until position is filled. Apply with cover letter and resume to Human Resources, P.O. Box 55, Colchester, VT 05446. (10-6)

FOR SALE

Dump Truck. The Town of Mendon, Vt. has for sale a 1999 Ford F550 dump truck with XLT package, 4x4, 17,500 GVW, 6-speed manual transmission, 7.3 liter turbo diesel, 70,000 miles, 3-yard Everest dump body, electronic clutch hydraulic pump, air, radio, cassette. Trailer towing package with brake controller, Whelen strobe light system, Swenson dual auger sander, 9’ Fisher snow plow, 9’ Hoosatonic reversible snow plow, 2 sets of tires with rims. Asking $25,000. Truck can be seen at the Mendon Town Office, 34 US Route 4, Mendon. For more information, call Bill Ellis, Road Commissioner, 382/773-4402. (11-13)
Zoning Administrator. The Town of Wilmington, Vt. seeks a full-time zoning administrator to administer, implement, and enforce town zoning. Responsibilities for this three-year appointment include assisting the public with town zoning process in a customer-oriented manner, balancing the needs of the public while adhering to town and state laws, and assisting the Development Review Board and Planning Commission. Requirements: three years experience in zoning administration or equivalent combination of experience and education in related field; a working knowledge of the theory and practices of zoning and town planning, including sustainable communities; a valid driver's license, excellent record keeping, organizational, detailed-oriented and people skills; the availability to work night and weekend hours as needed; and an assertiveness and commitment to process improvement. For more information and a job application, go online to www.wilmingtonvermont.us, or visit the Town Manager's Office, 2 East Main Street, Wilmington, VT 05363. Deadline: December 6, 2006. EOE. (11-17)

Library Director. The Town of Shelburne, Vt. is seeking a full-time Library Director to manage a growing municipal library in this active community of 7,000. The Director supervises 2 full-time and 7 part-time employees as well as numerous volunteers. The library houses 30,000 volumes with a circulation approaching 60,000. A Master's degree in Library Science plus 5 years of experience, including at least 2 years as a supervisor is desired. In addition to having the knowledge and experience to manage a municipal library, the successful candidate will be able to demonstrate a commitment to customer service and quality standards. Current salary range is $39,520-$47,840, plus a competitive benefit package. For a complete job description, go to www.shelburnevt.org. To apply, send letter of interest and resume to Paul W. Bohne III, Town Manager, P.O. Box 88, Shelburne, VT 05482, or e-mail pbbohne@shelburnevt.org. EOE. (11-15)

Community Planner. Plymouth, NH, which has recently experienced considerable commercial and residential growth, seeks a community planner. The position's responsibilities include coordinating all community planning, zoning, and economic development activities for the Town; updating the Town's Master Plan and other land use related planning studies; annually updating the Town's Capital Improvement Program; and assisting the Planning and Zoning Boards with their current activities. Candidate qualifications should include a Bachelor's degree in municipal planning, engineering, or related field; additional coursework and continuing education in advanced areas of planning technology is preferred; a minimum of two years of experience in municipal planning, or any equivalent combination of education and experience, which clearly demonstrates possession of the required knowledge, skills, and abilities. Salary range, $45,000-$50,000, depending upon qualifications. Position open until filled. Submit resume and cover letter to Town Administrator, Town Hall, 6 Post Office Square, Plymouth, NH 03264. (11-14)

Town Manager. The Town of Stowe, Vt. seeks an energetic, creative and personable professional for the position of Town Manager. Renowned for its scenery, cultural activities, recreation and resorts, Stowe (pop. 4,339, with seasonal increases to 10,000) is the quintessential New England community. The Manager reports to a five-member Selectboard and supervises all departments. The current operating budget is $8.7 million, with 65 full-time employees. Primary responsibilities include financial management and budgeting, personnel administration/labor relations, community and intergovernmental relations and implementation of town policies. For more information and a full job description, go to http://www.vlct.org/marketplace/classifiedads/. Five years management experience, high degree of tactful communication and negotiation skills, and bachelor's degree in appropriate discipline required; master's preferred. Hiring range $80,000 to $95,000. Please send cover letter and resume in confidence to Stowe Manager Search, VLCT, 89 Main Street, Montpelier, VT 05602. Resume review begins December 15, 2006. EOE. (11-10)

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For more information about the following workshops or events, please contact Jessica Hill, VLCT Manager, Administrative Services, tel., 800/649-7915; e-mail, jhill@vlct.org. Or visit http://www.vlct.org/eventscalendar/ and select a workshop for more information or to register on-line. (The on-line registration option is available for VLCT workshops and events only.)

VLCT Health Trust Regional Meeting. Wednesday, December 6, 2006, Town Gym, Brighton, 8-11 a.m. VLCT Member Relations staff, joined by CIGNA representatives, will present the Health Trust’s new CIGNA products and services. Please come with your questions!

Selectboard Forum. Saturday, December 9, 2006. Vermont College, Montpelier. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center. This year, we will offer one selectboard training in the fall and one in the spring. The Selectboard Forum is targeted towards more seasoned members (though all are welcome) and will focus on some of the more difficult challenges of municipal governance such as personnel, financial management and ordinance enforcement.

Legislative Preview. Tuesday, December 12, 2006, Milton Town Office, or Thursday, December 14, Wilmington Town Office. 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. Sponsored by VLCT Public Policy and Advocacy Services. Come and meet with VLCT legislative staff at a location near you to discuss the upcoming session.

Stewardship of the Urban Landscape (S.O.U.L.). Monday evenings from January 8 - March 5, 2007. Vermont Interactive Television sites around the state. S.O.U.L. is a 40-hour course designed for community volunteer group members, tree wardens, municipal officials, citizens, and others who are interested in the topics and issues of urban and community trees and forests. The program combines technical information on tree biology, tree assessment, municipal tree management, and proper maintenance with leadership skills. Participants walk away better prepared to engage in the management of their community’s tree resource. For more information, please contact katherine.forrer@uvm.edu, call 802/223-2389, ext. 25, or visit www.vtcommunityforestry.org.

Subdivision Primer. Thursday, January 18, 2007. Vermont Interactive Television sites around the state. Sponsored by the VLCT Municipal Assistance Center and your local regional planning commission. This second workshop in a three-part series will focus on reviewing subdivision applications, paying particular attention to applying appropriate conditions, reviewing applications for planned unit developments and incorporating water quality protection strategies.

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